

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7227
INFO USMISSION GENEVA
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL SONGKHLA
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 33804

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SREF, CB, TH, VS
SUBJECT: REFOULEMENT OF CAMBODIAN REFUGEES; MORE REFUGEE
BOAT ARRIVALS

REF: BANGKOK 33414

SUMMARY: REFUGEES AT ARANYAPRATHET HAVE APPARENTLY RELAXED
SINCE MOI OFFICIAL ASSURED THEM THERE WOULD BE NO OTHDR FORCED
REPATRIATIONS AS LONG AS LONG AS THEY BEHAVE THEMSELVES. END SUMMARY

1. DURING VISIT OF MOI AND UNHCR OFFICIALS TO SEVERAL REFUGEE
CAMPS DURING THE WEEKEND, INTERIOR DEPUTY UNDERSECRETARY
DAMRONG SUNTHON SARATHUN MET WITH REFUGEES AT ARANYAPRATHET
AND ASSURED THEM THAT THE RTG WOULD NOT FORCIBLY REPATRIATE
ANY OF THEM OF CAMBODIA SO LONG AS THEY STAY OUT OF TROUBLE.
WE UNDERSTAND THAT DAMRONG'S COMMENTS CAME ACROSS WELL AND
THAT THE MOOD AMONG THE REFUGEES HAS ACCORDINGLY RELAXED.

2. VOLAG REPRESENTATIVES BASED IN ARANYAPRATHET REPORT THAT
NO NEW REFUGEES HAVE ARRIVED THERE (WITH POSSIBLE
EXCEPTION OF THE SIX KC WHO WERE ALLEGEDLY PUSHED BACK
AFTER SEVERAL HOURS ON THAI SOIL NOV 28, REFTEL) SINCE THE
REFOULEMENT OF THE 26 AND NOV 23. ONE EXPLANATION IS THE
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WORD CIRCULATING IN ARNAYAPRATHET THAT THE CAMBODIAN

GOVERNMENT HAS WIDELY PUBLICIZED THE INCIDENT, INCLUDING THE RESULTING EXECUTIONS, THROUGHOUT WESTERN CAMBODIA, WITH POTENTIAL REFUGEES NOW AVOIDING THE ARANYAPRATHET AREA, ALTHOUGH SOME HAVE REPORTEDLY ARRIVED ALONG OTHER PORTIONS OF THE BORDER.

3. THERE IS SOME RESENTMENT ON THE PART OF THAI WORKING WITH REFUGEES THAT THE WORLD DID NOT TREAT THAILAND VERY FAIRLY ON THE ISSUE OF THE 26. THE MAINTAIN THAT, RATHER THAN BLAMING CAMBODIA FOR WHAT IT DID TO ITS OWN PEOPLE. FOREIGN OPINION HAS CONCENTRATED ON CHASTIZING THAILAND, INSTEAD, A SOMEWHAT UNDERSTANDABLE, IF WEAK, ARGUMENT.

4. NEW BOAT REFUGEES FROM VIET-NAM CONTINUE TO ARRIVE IN LARGE NUMBERS (EMBASSY REPORTING ON THIS MOVEMENT SEPTTEL) AND ARE BEING PERMITTED TO REMAIN. HOWEVER, BANGKOK POST DEC 15 REPORTED THAT LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN NAKHON SI THAMMARAT PROVINCE ASKED SIX VIETNAMESE WHO ARRIVED BY BOAT DEC 11 TO LEAVE THAILAND TWO DAYS LATER. IF TRUE, THEY WILL PRESUMABLY REAPPEAR IN NEARBY SONGKHLA OR ELSEWHERE AND BE PERMITTED TO STAY.

5. COMMENT: DAMRONG'S COMMENTS AT ARANYAPRATHET GIVE THE APPEARANCE OF AN ASIAN UNDERSTANDING THAT THE AFFAIR OF THE 26 IS CLOSED AND WILL NOT RECUR, SATISFYING BOTH SIDES WHILE AVOIDING THE QUESTION OF CULPABILITY. BOTH UNHCR AND EMBASSY BELIEVE WE WILL HEAR LITTLE MORE OF IT.

WHITEHOUSE

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